

**OFFICIAL MINUTES  
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
October 24, 2008**

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council was held on Friday, October 24, 2008 at the Pigeon River Country Management Unit Headquarters. Chairman Glasser called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ken Glasser, Carol Clute, Pete Gustafson, Eugene Horan, John Walters, Mike Castle, Jim Supina, Arch Reeves and Bob Hess

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Don Huff, Michael Estes, Bob Bolinger, Dave Smethurst, Randy Sanders, Dick Myers, Mark Ennes, Paul Rose and Rique Campa

**EX-OFFICIO PRESENT** Brian Mastenbrook, Dayle Garlock (Acting Unit Manager), and Rick Henderson

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:** Dave Borgeson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Shawn Weber, Laurie Lemont, Dee Ann Hounsbery, Janet Rahn, Jackie Konecke, Arleth Meredith, Jean Lindle, Bonnie Cornelius, David Lawrence, Larry Kleinhardt, Judy Kleinhardt, Tom Charest, Kerry Wieber, Brenda Breitmeyer, Marvin Weber, Mindy Koch, Jim Eason, Ken Thurlow, Joyce Thurlow, John Pfluecke, Nick Torsky, Chris Christopherson, Kerry Hase, Darlene Alexander, Eric Bottorff, Brenda Lewis, Lynne Boyd, Randy Weber, Richard Kropf, John Sweeney, Jude Jarecki and Joe Jarecki

**CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:**

Chairman Glasser said that Dick Myers' wife told him that Dick is recovering from heart surgery and urged everyone to keep Dick in their thoughts and prayers.

**AGENDA**

A report by Rick Henderson was added by Chairman Glasser and no other changes were requested.

**APPROVAL OF July 25, 2008 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion** by Walters, support by Supina to approve the July 25, 2008 minutes as published. **Motion** carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Richard Kropf said he is concerned about the lack of enforcement of the new rules. He gave several examples of when he observed horse riders, and one example of bicyclists, riding in places they are not supposed to be riding.

John Pfluecke said the Chairman of the Board of Golden Lotus, Inc. asked him to make a statement that the Chair of Golden Lotus is meeting with Huron Pines RC&D soon to discuss the possibility of dam removal or working towards the best interests of the river.

Laurie Lemont said she is a horse person and has been following the rules, as have others that she knows. She is concerned about safety, especially on main roads with logging trucks. She is afraid that the first major injury or fatality will be used as a reason to kick horses out of the Pigeon. She wants to work with the DNR to identify routes that will allow horse riders to avoid high traffic areas like Hardwood Lake and Osmun roads.

She asked what the conflicts between user groups are. Since the campgrounds are not fully subscribed, how is that over-use? She said several studies have shown that horses do not spread non-native species. She said she would like to see better communication between the DNR, the Advisory Council and horse groups. She asked if maps will be available in Elk Hill Campground to educate horse riders about where they can ride. She said horse riders want to help with maintenance and encouraged using horse riders to maintain roads, trails, etc.

Jackie Konecke, Alpena Horseman's Club, said it is not clear where it is okay to ride horses. People come to enjoy the PRC and want to follow the rules. How can Pitman Robertson funds be endangered by horses riding in the PRC because many other states that receive PR funds allow horses in their state forests? None of this makes sense – documentation is not there for the reasons that were used to restrict horse riding and camping in the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

Randy Weber said he purchased property on Trowbridge Road last October to be able to ride horses in the Pigeon. He asked why there can't be a horse trail through Green Timbers to access Honey Locust Trail rather than having to ride on Fontinalis and Sturgeon Valley roads which are heavily used by vehicles.

Brenda Breitmeyer from Buckley asked why horse people are being discriminated against. She would like to see trails along section lines open from the east into the Pigeon.

Ken Thurlow from Gladwin asked how many acres in the Pigeon were purchased by Pitman Robertson funds.

Bonnie Cornelius, Alpena Horseman's Association passed around pictures of her granddaughter's first horse camp in the Pigeon. She asked Council members to think of the next generation and said "You don't need to shut this down. We can work it out."

John Sweeney asked if bear hunters are allowed to drag the roads.

Brenda Lewis asked why she should be denied the chance to bring her grandson here to ride. Riding is families together and not destructive. Horse riders do not want to be on roads, we want to be on trails.

Dee Ann Hounsbery, Hillman, said she hunts and fishes as well as rides horses. She does it all and it is unfair to limit children who want to enjoy all aspects of the PRC.

DNR Resource Management Deputy Director Mindy Koch described why the Concept of Management was updated; the multi year update process that was used; and the various user groups, including horse user groups, that were involved in the update process. She said the Pigeon River Country State Forest has been treated uniquely by the Department since its inception. She said recreation use in the PRC has been managed since day one and listed user groups other than horse users that have been restricted (snowmobiles, bicycles, ORVs).

She said while only about 12 acres were purchased with Pitman Robertson funds, over 50% of the Pigeon River Country State Forest was purchased by hunting and fishing license money. She explained why Pitman Robertson operating funds influence how state Fish and Game funds are spent. The federal government has had the DNR prohibit horses in places where there was no historical use. In places like the PRC where there was historical use, the DNR must be sure that horse use does not negatively affect hunting and fishing.

Koch explained that, while the Department carefully considers their advice, the Advisory Council is not a decision making body. She suggested that horse users raise their concerns with the Natural Resources

Commission, which is the DNR policy making body.

Koch said the DNR has met with three statewide equestrian groups to initiate a dialogue about equestrian use on state forest land. She also said that signage about where horses may be ridden in the PRC needs to be improved and the DNR will be working on it.

### **HACKETT LAKE ACQUISITION**

Kerry Wieber, FMFM Land Acquisition Specialist, said the Department is considering changing the PRC boundary to include the new Hackett Lake acquisition and would be interested in the Advisory Council's recommendation.

**Motion** by Gustafson, support by Hess, that the Advisory Council supports the inclusion of the Hackett Lake acquisition within the boundaries of the Pigeon River Country State Forest to be managed under the guidelines of the Concept of Management. Motion carried.

After discussion, **Motion** by Gustafson, support by Walters, that the Department also consider including the Greenwood Foundation Conservation Easement within the boundaries of the PRC. Motion carried.

Wieber also described several private ownerships within the Pigeon that she is working on acquiring. She said the owners approached the state about purchasing their land and she has asked for \$1.5 million from the Trust Fund to make the purchases. She also said closing should occur in a couple of weeks on an 80 acre parcel in the PRC near Green Timbers.

### **DNR FOREST, MINERAL & FIRE MANAGEMENT DIVISION UPDATE**

FMFM Chief Lynne Boyd said the recent response to input/questions from the Advisory Council took too long. She has also heard that the Council is concerned that some issues are not being brought to the Council, for example the Pickerel Lake Campground upgrade. She asked what improvements in communication need to be made.

Boyd said that interviews to fill the PRC Unit Manager position are scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup>. They have five good candidates. She expects to have the new Unit Manager in place in December.

### **ADVISORY COUNCIL ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AMENDMENT**

Ken Glasser said that in unusual circumstances, such as an oil and gas issue with a short time line for input, there might be a need for Council input between meetings. He suggested that consideration be given to amending the By Laws to allow for voting by email, phone or fax.

Lynne Boyd said the Advisory Council is subject to the Open Meetings Act, so the By Laws may not be able to be amended to allow voting in a non public setting. She said a white paper has been written about this topic and she will see that the Council gets a copy.

**Motion** by Walters, support by Supina, to postpone this issue until the next Advisory Council meeting. Motion carried.

### **CHARLTON 4 CPF REMEDIATION PROJECT STATUS REPORT**

DEQ District Geologist Rick Henderson introduced David Lawrence who is a new employee at the Gaylord DEQ office.

Henderson said the Charlton 4 CPF cleanup is proceeding well since only two of the 35 monitor wells are still showing detectable levels of contaminants. Because there is concern that there may not be enough monitor wells in the swamp, modeling was done. It showed that contaminants would be non detect within 258 feet of the swamp edge if no remediation had been done. The next sampling event

will be December 8<sup>th</sup>. They will probably be looking at monitoring for closure of the remediation project in about a year.

### **CONSERVATION OFFICER REPORT**

Conservation Officers Nick Torsky (Otsego County) and Eric Bottorff (Cheboygan County) discussed law enforcement issues in the PRC. They said there was not much enforcement of the new horse use and bicycle use restrictions this fall because the discovery of chronic wasting disease in a private cervid facility in the Lower Peninsula took priority over everything else. They did not receive many complaints about horses or bicycles, at least partially because people usually do not make a complaint after the fact. If they do not have a cell phone or cannot get through on their cell phone, people tend not to report incidents later. Torsky and Bottorff encouraged people to let them know if they are seeing a problem that needs to be addressed even if it is after the fact. Those reports help to focus their efforts on problem activities and locations.

There is a class of officers moving through training now and two of them will be moving into the area. This will help enforcement efforts in the PRC. There will be a significant jump in snowmobile enforcement starting this winter because they will be writing tickets instead of just giving warnings. Horse use will get more officer attention next fall.

They were asked about how the sinkhole lakes and Black River regulation changes were going. Torsky said there was one poaching incident on Section 4 Lake, but in general, their experience was good with the sinkhole lakes. There were no significant problems on the Black River.

### **EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

#### **Wildlife Division**

Brian Mastenbrook said a 40 acre prescribed burn for aspen reproduction between Tin Shanty and Sawdust Pile roads was successful, but is experiencing heavy elk browse.

A hydro-ax was used on 40 acres of openings to set back the brush at a cost of \$250/acre. Use of the hydro-ax will continue in Green Timbers and other places in the PRC.

\$15,000 was approved to help fund the Pigeon River Habitat Initiative so funding for the project is secured for another year.

Mastenbrook said Mark Monroe again accomplished significant opening habitat work including mowing 295 acres and planting 204 acres.

He passed out and discussed a 2008 August/September Elk Kill Location Map (copy attached). There were 122 permits (110 regular and 12 tribal) and permittees took 80 elk. There are 242 permits (220 regular and 22 tribal) for the December season. There are lots of animals outside of the target elk range and the elk population is above goal. The goal is 8-900 animals and the count for the last survey was 1198 animals. Mastenbrook said they are working to reduce the population to be within goal over a two year period.

A bear management planning effort is going on now. There will be a statewide deer management planning effort starting. That is a significant step since the Department doesn't have a deer management plan.

Mastenbrook discussed chronic wasting disease. There is one confirmed case in Kent County and one suspicious in Bay County. Both are in private cervid facilities. The interaction between various other cervid facilities in the Lower Peninsula with those two was significant which justifies the new baiting and feeding restrictions. There is no

evidence it is in the wild deer herd at this time. There will be stepped up testing this year.

**FMFM Division**

Dayle Garlock passed out a list of 2010 treatments that were approved at the compartment review in August (copy attached).

**2009 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING DATES**

After discussion, Chairman Glasser said that the Advisory Council meeting dates for 2009 will be the third Friday of January (16<sup>th</sup>), April (17<sup>th</sup>), July (17<sup>th</sup>) and October (16<sup>th</sup>).

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Arch reeves said he spent lots of time in the PRC this fall. He saw fewer horses and thinks he had better success seeing elk as a result of there being fewer horses.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Glasser at 8:40 p.m.

Minutes were taken and summarized by Joe Jarecki.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Whitcomb, Secretary